

Lummis	Romney	Thune
Marshall	Rounds	Tillis
McConnell	Rubio	Toomey
Moran	Sasse	Tuberville
Murkowski	Scott (FL)	Wicker
Paul	Scott (SC)	Young
Portman	Shelby	
Risch	Sullivan	

## NOT VOTING—1

Hirono

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas are 50, the nays 49.

The motion is agreed to.

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Xavier Becerra, of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

## MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, before I begin my formal remarks, I want to pause to condemn the hatred and violence that took eight precious lives last night in Metropolitan Atlanta.

I agree with Georgians, with Americans, with people of love all across the world. This unspeakable violence visited largely upon the Asian community is one that causes all of us to recommit ourselves to the way of peace, an active peace that prevents these kinds of tragedies from happening in the first place.

We pray for these families.

Mr. President, I rise here today, as a proud American and as one of the newest Members of the Senate, in awe of the journey that has brought me to these hallowed Halls and with an abiding sense of reverence and gratitude for the faith and sacrifices of ancestors who paved the way.

I am a proud son of the great State of Georgia, born and raised in Savannah, a coastal city known for its cobblestone streets and verdant town squares. Towering oak trees, centuries old and covered in gray Spanish moss, stretched from one side of the street to the other, bend and beckon the lover of history and horticulture to this city by the sea.

I was educated at Morehouse College, and I still serve in the pulpit of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, both in Atlanta, the cradle of the civil rights movement. And so like those oak trees in Savannah, my roots go down deep, and they stretch wide in the soil of Waycross, GA, and Burke County, and Screven County. In a word, I am Georgia, a living example and embodiment of its history and its hope, of its pain and promise, the brutality and possibility.

At the time of my birth, Georgia's two Senators were Richard B. Russell and Herman E. Talmadge, both arch segregationists and unabashed adversaries of the civil rights movement.

After the Supreme Court's landmark *Brown v. Board* ruling outlawing school segregation, Talmadge warned

that "blood will run in the streets of Atlanta."

Senator Talmadge's father, Eugene Talmadge, former Governor of our State, had famously declared: "The South loves the Negro in his place, but his place is at the back door."

When once asked how he and his supporters might keep Black people away from the polls, he picked up a scrap of paper and wrote a single word on it: "Pistols."

Yet there is something in the American covenant, in its charter documents and its Jeffersonian ideals, that bends toward freedom. And led by a preacher and a patriot named King, Americans of all races stood up. History vindicated the movement that sought to bring us closer to our ideals, to lengthen and strengthen the cords of our democracy, and I now hold the seat—the Senate seat—where Herman E. Talmadge sat.

That is why I love America. I love America because we always have a path to make it better, to build a more perfect Union. It is the place where a kid like me, who grew up in public housing, the first college graduate in my family, can now stand as a United States Senator.

I had an older father. He was born in 1917. Serving in the Army during World War II, he was once asked to give up his seat to a young teenager while wearing his soldier's uniform, as they said, "making the world safe for democracy." But he was never bitter. By the time I came along, he had already seen the arc of change in our country. He maintained his faith in God and in his family and in the American promise, and he passed that faith on to his children.

My mother grew up in Waycross, GA. Do you know where that is? It is way 'cross Georgia. Like a lot of Black teenagers in the 1950s, she spent her summers picking somebody else's tobacco and somebody else's cotton. But because this is America, the 82-year-old hands that used to pick somebody else's cotton went to the polls in January and picked her youngest son to be a United States Senator. Ours is a land where possibility is born of democracy: a vote, a voice, a chance to help determine the direction of the country and one's own destiny within it—possibility born of democracy.

That is why this past November and January, my mom and other citizens of Georgia grabbed hold of that possibility and turned out in record numbers, 5 million in November, 4.5 million in January—far more than ever in our State's history. Turnout for a typical runoff doubled, and the people of Georgia sent their first African-American Senator and first Jewish Senator, my brother JON OSSOFF, to these hallowed Halls.

But then, what happened? Some politicians did not approve of the choice made by the majority of voters in a hard-fought election in which each side got the chance to make its case to the

voters. And rather than adjusting their agenda, rather than changing their message, they are busy trying to change the rules. We are witnessing right now a massive and unabashed assault on voting rights, unlike anything we have ever seen since the Jim Crow era. This is Jim Crow with new clothes.

Since the January election, some 250 voter suppression bills have been introduced by State legislatures all across the country, from Georgia to Arizona, from New Hampshire to Florida, using the big lie of voter fraud as a pretext for voter suppression—the same big lie that led to a violent insurrection on this very Capitol the day after my election. Within 24 hours, we elected Georgia's first African-American and Jewish Senators, and hours later the Capitol was assaulted. You see in just a few precious hours the tension very much alive in the soul of America. The question before all of us at every moment is, What will we do to push us in the right direction?

So politicians, driven by that big lie, aim to severely limit and in some cases eliminate automatic and same-day voter registration, mail-in and absentee voting, and early voting and weekend voting. They want to make it easier to purge voters from the voting roll altogether. As a voting rights activist, I have seen up close just how draconian these measures can be. I hail from a State that purged 200,000 voters from the rolls one Saturday night in the middle of the night. We know what is happening here. Some people don't want some people to vote.

I was honored on a few occasions to stand with our hero and my parishioner, John Lewis. I was his pastor, but I am clear: He was my mentor. On more than one occasion, we boarded buses together after Sunday church services as part of our Souls to the Polls program, encouraging the Ebenezer Church family and other communities of faith to participate in the democratic process. Now, just a few months after Congressman Lewis's death, there are those in the Georgia legislature—some who even dared to praise his name—that are now trying to get rid of Sunday Souls to the Polls, making it a crime for people who pray together to get on a bus together in order to vote together. I think that is wrong. As a matter of fact, I think that a vote is a kind of prayer for the kind of world we desire for ourselves and for our children, and our prayers are stronger when we pray together.

To be sure, we have seen these kinds of voter suppression tactics before. They are part of a long and shameful history in Georgia and throughout our Nation. But refusing to be denied, Georgia citizens and citizens across our country braved the heat and the cold and the rain, some standing in line for 5 hours, 6 hours, 10 hours just to exercise their constitutional right to vote—young people, old people, sick people, working people already underpaid and forced to lose wages to pay a kind of